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## Review

# Social movements in a split: Bolivia's protesters after their triumph

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**This article takes Bolivia as a case in point to reflect upon the dilemmas and challenges that social movements find themselves confronted with once they, and in particular the party/movement coalition representing their grievances and demands, win power. The point to be made is that a fissure between the governing faction or party of the victorious movements and the remaining constituting movements is inevitable, not so much because of "moderation" of the former, but because governing responsibility will make this faction or party abandon its movement characteristics. After some brief theoretical explorations, the process of constructing the movements and the candidacy of left-wing indigenous President Evo Morales and his MAS party is addressed. The subsequent section presents a discussion of the new challenges faced by MAS after it assumed power, and the doubts, actions, and new "status" of the social movements that back MAS under the current administration. The point is made that a drifting apart inevitably occurred between MAS as governing party and the social movements behind it, because governing is accompanied by obligations that the movements can afford to disregard. The article ends with a discussion of the issues raised in it.**

**Key words:** Bolivia, social movements, political transition, governance, governing, responsibility.

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis to be addressed in this article is that, in the case of outright victory for a social movement or group of

social movements combined with an institutional (democratic) continuity, the movement (s) will split into two factions. One faction, which will often take the form of a political party, will have the additional concern of governing and upholding democratic arrangements, while the other faction will continue to pressure for the categorical deliverance of the movements' program. The precise balance between these two factions will depend on the radicalism of the movements' agenda, especially with regard to the reform of state institutionality, the "statesmanship" assumed by the governing coalition, and on more contingent factors like the strength of oppositional forces, the presence or absence of an ethnic antagonism, and international pressure.

Specific circumstances will, of course, make crucial differences. In cases in which the challenger's victory came with a complete overhaul of institutionality, developments will often take a genuine revolutionary turn. In countries like Iran (1979), Zimbabwe (1980), Nicaragua (1979), and East Timor (2002), the change was violent and the conflict was of a "us or them" nature. Nearly all institutions collapsed. Because of the practical absence of the former ruler's voice and influence after

ABBREVIATIONS: CIDOB, 'Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente', confederation of indigenous people from the east; COB, 'Central Obrera Boliviana', national trade union federation; CONALDE, 'Consejo Nacional Democrático', national democratic council; CONAMAQ, 'Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu', national council of indigenous hamlets and administrative units of the former south-eastern quarter (Collasuyu) of the four quarters of the Inca Empire or Tawantinsuyu; COR, 'Central Obrera Regional'; regional (El Alto) trade union federation; CPESC, 'Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos del Oriente', coordination of indigenous peoples from the east; CSUTCB, 'Confederación Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia', Bolivian confederation of peasant workers; FEJUVE, 'Federación de Juntas de Vecinos', federation of neighborhood councils; MAS, 'Movimiento al Socialismo', movement toward socialism; MST, 'Movimiento sin Tierra', movement of landless peasants

NEP, New Economic Policy – implemented in Bolivia as from 1985; PNUD, 'Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo', United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

victory, the situation was characterized by the need to build a completely new state apparatus, and even a new country. The case of South Africa (1994) is unique in the sense that the change was, eventually, a negotiated one, but it was accompanied by a radical transformation of the system of democracy and governance.

Our concern here is with cases in which a major political shift went together with a large degree of continuity in the foundations of the state – and confining ourselves to, by and large, democratic states. In Brazil (2002), for instance, the PT victory was characterized by a long run-up episode and the inheritance of an intact state institutionality – and complicated by the lack of a majority in parliament. Finding itself in this quandary, it is no surprise that the PT government soon disillusioned the movements that had celebrated its victory. The author suggests that this is not only because of its inability to push through everything it once dreamed of (due to its minority handicap), but also because, once in government, it had to comply with rules and obligations that the movements – primarily interest promoters – could simply discard. Guaranteeing democratic mores is one of those obligations.

Here, it is Bolivia that will interest us. The country is a fascinating case in point to reflect upon when trying to understand the dynamics of the mix of a far-reaching political renovation effort and the permanence of the democratic institutions. This is especially the case because Bolivia's 2005 political revolution (which had a long run-up) was characterized on the one hand by a peaceful electoral process and institutional continuity, but on the other hand by the explicit desire of the new power holders and many of their supporting movements to "re-found" the country. Although the democratic legacy was the vehicle that had brought about the possibility to make this change, it was also one of the main points of contention the movements had rallied about. Apart from socio-economic issues, the goal was therefore not to abrogate democracy but to extend and deepen it, and to make it fit better in the specific ethno-cultural universe that they claimed Bolivia to be. Thus, from the outset, Bolivia's change was marked by two goals: To defend the rights and guarantees that are part and parcel of the liberal democracy and that had allowed for the space to win a resounding electoral victory, and simultaneously to "redo" this democracy because it stood for the injustices the movements felt had been done to them in the past.

What happened in Bolivia in December 2005? Indigenous presidential candidate Evo Morales, spokesman for many of the grievances a broad range of social movements in Bolivia had rallied about for years, won a landslide victory in the election (and went on to do even better in the December 2009 election). Ever since his inauguration in early 2006, the movements that supported his candidacy have been looking for a new role

and presence in developments in the country. Other movements that oppose his plans have also emerged.<sup>1</sup>

Morales's victory was unprecedented in several ways. First, the 2005 election signaled the end of the "old" party system, in which a relatively small number of established parties, occasionally supported by more volatile ones, had time and again formed a coalition. The system demonstrated a petty intra-party and inter-party logic and the inability to really make links with society. Political parties were absorbed in the internal and mutual squaring of accounts, in recruiting their cadres from unrepresentative population sectors (Lucero, 2008: 37 and following), and in 'welcoming' new political contenders with chicanery. Thousands of Bolivians felt that their interests and problems were hardly ever reflected in the government's decisions or parliamentary deliberations (Albó and Barrios, 1993: 146-148; Salman, 2007, Koonings and Mansilla, 2004; Crabtree and Whitehead, 2001: 218; Gray-Molina 2001: 63). Although the level of trust in politicians and parties is traditionally low in Latin America (Camp, 2001), it reached dramatic depths in Bolivia (Latinobarómetro, 2004, Salman, 2007<sup>2</sup>). The victory of MAS ('Movimiento al Socialismo') was one in which a "consolidated" but failing and inept party system (to be elaborated upon below) was crushed. Instead, the "movement party" (Zegada et al., 2008, 'passim') – MAS – assumed power. But the minority sectors that had been represented by the old polity had of course not disappeared.

Second, and often highlighted, was the first time that a candidate of indigenous descent had won the presidency of Bolivia. It confirmed the emancipation processes that had taken place in earlier decades. The awakening indigenous self-awareness of Bolivia's majority, which was facilitated in a paradoxical way by the "un-traditionalizing" shifts in indigenous habitat and access to city life, contributed to an increasing awareness of the systematic exclusion of indigenous representation from the hitherto subsequent governing coalitions.

Third and closely related to the previous point, a novel political configuration emerged from the frustration with the defective party system, the indigenous exclusion, and the neoliberal policies that had been pursued in the country since 1985 (again issues to be elaborated below). The criticism combined ethnic ingredients referring to governing ethics (promoting alleged indigenous traditions, such as subservient authorities, continuous deliberation, and close contact with the community as a whole), with ingredients alluding to the

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notes

<sup>1</sup> There is quite a bit of debate about whether only subaltern groups, or also elites, can make up "social movements." In this text, "social movements" is used for both types.

<sup>2</sup> In a 1990 survey by *Latinobarómetro* (2004), 77% of Bolivians expressed the conviction that political parties do not work for the good of the country and merely defend group interests. In most other Latin American countries, small majorities had confidence in the good intentions of political parties.

ideological rejection of “Western” greed, of indifference toward the environment and ‘Pachamama’, of rejecting the selling-out of national sovereignty (Albro, 2005: 445-448), and of profit above well-being (‘vivir bien’; “living well” instead of “getting more and more”). The revival of indigenous self-awareness thus merged with a criticism of “white” imperialism and of harsh, neoliberal capitalism. It made the political shift more than a routine exchange of power positions and a change in ideology: This was, in the words of MAS supporters, a “revolution.”

Fourth, and most important for our argument, one of the main reasons Morales’s victory was possible is that a sustained and massive series of protests had delegitimized and dented the incumbent party system and electoral system, and had stressed the themes that many Bolivians were concerned or angry about, namely indigenous exclusion, neoliberalism, privatizations, the “dumping” of the country’s natural resources, the lack of economic growth and employment, and what was perceived as a “treacherous democracy.” Evo Morales’s party (MAS) managed in 2005 to bring together many of these grievances in a credible electoral alternative. Several movements had joined forces in building the party, while others supported it and yet others critically sympathized with it. These movements now shifted positions from, as they are often coined, “challengers” to “members” (Tilly, 1978; McAdam et al., 2001). Simultaneously, new movements emerged to challenge the Morales government. Hence, not only the political and polity make-up, but also the social movement landscape in Bolivia underwent radical change.

The author argued that it is indeed an intricate matter for social movements to recreate their role once they have won their political fight and face the challenge of realizing their ideals – and now belong to the ruling group, ‘el oficialismo’, as it is most often called in Latin America. MAS is a peculiar entity in this respect: It is both a political party and the umbrella movement of many of the protest movements of 2000 to 2005. In a way, the government of Bolivia is itself “movementist” (Albro, 2005: 440; Zegada et al., 2008). More in particular, the author looked at the issue of the balancing act between those parts of the movements that have become the ruling apparatus, and the movements that remained movements, fostering the interests of their “social bases.” The author also looked at the opposition movements and addresses their strategies and actions, particularly in relation to the attitudes of the government-supporting movements. However, the author mainly analyzes how a rift emerged between the MAS-supporting movements that continued as movements (fighting for substantial changes and relatively indifferent to the vicissitudes of opponents or the nation-state as such), and MAS as governing party, unwilling and unable to be completely unconcerned about the sectors that had not supported it and now acted as the opposition. After all, MAS was governing a democratic state.

Some of the existing literature on “movement outcomes” and assess its applicability to the Bolivian case was first discussed. The genesis of MAS as a movementist party was then briefly sketch. In the subsequent section, the current situations was addressed and analyzed: A movementist party ruling, and dealing with, both its supporting and its opposing movements. In this setting, MAS has of course a clear sympathy for “its” movements and tries to push through the program that unites them, but at the same time, as it embodies the state, it is obliged to guarantee the political rights of its opponents. This obligation will inevitably create tensions between the forces that pursue “the total change,” and the forces that need to referee the game of realizing such a change amidst dissenters. Finally, the outcomes of the findings was discussed.

## **REFLECTING UPON THE OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTIONS**

Efforts have been made, but not often, to reflect upon the outcomes of social movements. According to Cress and Snow (2000: 1063-1064) and (Giugni, 1998: 373), “our understanding of the consequences of social movements is conspicuously underdeveloped.” Moreover, most of the literature concerned with the question confines its explanations and conceptual propositions to situations in which something had been won: It is about concessions, about some change, about “acceptance and/or advantages” (Gamson, 1990; Giugni, 1998: 376), or about new legislation. The situation in which a full overhaul of the polity or political system is the outcome, is not often addressed (Lanegran, 1995; Zuern, 2004).

Such views are of course helpful, as was explained here. This explanation, however, also will demonstrate the limitations of these contributions. The analyses discuss topics that have obvious relevance for situations of political renovation combined with institutional preservation. Cress and Snow (2000: 1098-1102), for instance, assert that the movement’s own characteristics, framing, and structures provide a more convincing cause for predicting outcomes (whether or not successful) than do the outward “conditions.” They add, however, that there is no singular predictor: It is the combination of movement characteristics and exterior condition that in the end helps explain the attainment of outcomes. In the case of Bolivia, this seems correct: It was the movements’ strength to frame, through MAS, their demands in such a way that ethnic, socio-economic, and political grievances could be amalgamated. However, this worked only in a setting in which the credibility of the traditional political system was largely in tatters (and thus an increasingly less appealing alternative) and simply not responsive. This led to a polarization in which the differences amongst the established parties became nearly invisible and, in the perception of many people,

irrelevant, as they as a whole were identified with the full range of grievances that people experienced (Salman, 2006, 2007). At the same time, the emerging alternative MAS came to be identified as the only candidate that could realize all the outcomes they desired but that were blocked by the establishment: Representation and resources for MAS, and rights and relief for its constituency (Cress and Snow, 2000: 1067; Córdova et al., 2009: 67).

Giugni (1998) and Gamson (1990) also concentrate on factors that help to explain success, rather than on the movements' vicissitudes after they achieved their substantial success. Their frameworks turn out to have limited value for the Bolivian case. Gamson's emphasis on single-issue demands, on selective incentives, on the use of disruption or violence as a tactic, and on the need for some movement bureaucratization, centralization, and unity, as ingredients for success, applies only very partially to the Bolivian situation. MAS complied with only one aspect: The selective use of violence. However, its demands covered a host of issues; and in the case of MAS, the aspect of centralization and unity is an intricate one, a matter that was discussed. At any rate, simply stating that MAS was bureaucratized, centralized, and united is inadequate. Giugni (1998) stresses, more or less against Cress and Snow (2000), that there is need to focus on "the environmental conditions that channel their (the movements') consequences" (idem: 379), and not on the movements' own characteristics. He highlights public opinion (and points to "the fundamental role of the media" therein (idem: 380)) and political opportunity structures. Again, reflecting upon the Bolivian case, these suggestions result in mixed findings. On the one hand, obviously, in public opinion, the credibility of the old political party system had been rapidly dwindling since the 1990s. This, however, was hardly conveyed by most of the media in Bolivia: They were in general quite hostile toward Morales and MAS. As for the political opportunity structure, the "old" parties were no doubt in disarray. On the other hand, the "broad, system-wide crisis" (idem: 380) that is allegedly a factor in the movements' success, was largely produced by these movements themselves, through their unceasing protest rallies. And Giugni's overview of possible outcomes (Gamson, 1990), which consists of full response, pre-emption, co-optation, and collapse (Giugni, 1998: 382), does not really consider the possibility of a full-fledged overthrow of the "old rulers."

The reason to refer to these contributions, even though they hardly touch upon the analysis of social movements "after complete victory," is that they deal extensively with the specificities of movements' environments and characteristics. These characteristics seem to be a crucial point of consideration if one wants to understand the developments 'after' the movements or their electoral representative took over, as at that moment the movements already have specific histories that no doubt inform their stances and fates after the triumph of their

electoral flagship. One issue in particular also brought up by Giugni and by Cress and Snow (though they disagree about it), should be taken into consideration here. This is the issue of the relative impact of the internal and the external factors that influence social movement outcomes. They no doubt feed back upon each other. Exterior factors – such as a sympathetic or antagonistic stance on the part of the authorities, or a supportive or indifferent or hostile public opinion and media, or weak or strong governing institutions, or variations in authority's tactics and levels of repression, or the presence or absence of mediating entities – no doubt influence movement characteristics and developments. On the other hand, however, movements' characteristics – such as type and depth of the motivation of participants, the livelihood importance of the issues, the inclusiveness, coherence, simplicity, and rhetorical qualities of the mobilization discourse, the degree of institutionalization, and the willingness to "deal" with authorities and/or opponents – doubtlessly influence the reactions in the realms of public opinion and debate, media, and the polity, and thus the conditions under which the movements further evolve. It is in this balance that things change drastically after the movements win: From then on, the point of departure is a sympathetic, "soft," ally-like attitude on the part of the authorities ("our people"). However, the point that is often overlooked is the change in position, that the movements' uniting party (or "movement party" or standard-bearer) goes through after the victory: It changes from being a 'demanding entity' to being an implementing and, most crucially, a 'governing' entity – and that restricts its room for maneuver, and therefore leads to tensions with its constitutive parts.

At any rate, these contributions tell us little about what is likely to happen to movements once they have practically ousted the forces that refused to listen to their demands. The analysis of processes within movements after they have gained victory still seems to be incipient. The few analyses of movements that brought "their" party to power generally emphasize that the relationship often becomes thorny or at least complicated (Bowie, 2005: 56-59; Valente, 2008; Osava, 2006). Although on the one hand, a loyalty persists (partly triggered by the insight that political alternatives would only make things worse), on the other hand – and this is the crucial feature hitherto insufficiently theorized – a distance emerges as a result of the differences between the mores of governing and those of interest promotion. This, the author believe, is also why movements often face the danger of being co-opted and thus rendered harmless, or end up constrained in their actions because of their wish not to destabilize the government (Zegada et al., 2008: 102). But the specific dynamics that characterize the situation after victory and after the movements have split into two factions, one of which will actually assume governance, while the other will allegedly continue to support the shared cause, have scarcely been systematically

addressed. With Bolivia as illustration, it was suggested that in such cases the governing responsibilities will weaken the movement characteristics of the governing faction, and thus produce tensions that will reflect disagreements not necessarily in terms of radicalism or “speed,” but in terms of ‘position’.

Resuming, although most literature on movement outcomes focuses on the factors that influence these outcomes rather than on the post-victory situation, they still contribute a lot in terms of giving center stage to these factors as antecedents of and backdrop to the developments such movements will go through after their electoral allies or standard-bearers win. The actual processes after such a win, however, have not received much attention – and where they have, most cases concerned a revolutionary or military victory, not an electoral one. Additionally, the point most often missed in the cases in which such themes were addressed, was that the findings that highlight the growing rift between the governing faction and the interest-promoting faction of the social movements’ conglomerate, were caused not only by the inability to realize all the changes overnight, but also by changes in the role and the position of the governing faction. After assuming power, this faction can no longer focus only on the substance of the changes, because it must also pay attention to the procedures. The more radical the movements’ propositions about institutional change were and still are after the turn, the more likely it is that the governing faction will encounter problems in trying to combine its program with its governing and rights-warranting duties. This will produce a shift in the attitude of social movements that were once a pillar under the resurrectionist standard-bearer: After the shift they will often become, at best, an exacting friend.

## **BOLIVIA’S TURBULENT RECENT HISTORY: THE RISE OF MAS AS MOVEMENT PARTY**

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America. It has barely 9 million inhabitants, of whom allegedly more than half are of indigenous descent (Toranzo, 2008). It has historically been an unstable country, undergoing a series of ‘coup d’états’ between 1964 and the early 1980s. Its governments were also characterized by a historical subservience to external interests and foreign powers, and by unequal control over the territory and the population (PNUD, 2007: 34-37). After suffering almost two decades of authoritarian rule, Bolivia restored democracy in 1982. The elected, left-wing government, however, was overwhelmed by raging inflation and the legacy of dictatorship, and was thus short-lived. As from 1985, the country was ruled by a series of coalition governments, all of which shared the basic idea that the country needed “modernization” – read: A neoliberal reform (Klein, 1992; Kohl and Farthing, 2006). This meant an end to the “national development policies” that had been in

place since the 1950s. Now a New Economic Policy (NEP) was proposed. The NEP consisted of the usual recipe to reduce the fiscal deficit, reform the monetary system, slim down the state bureaucracy (by means of massive lay-offs), liberalize markets, foster exports (mainly raw materials and agricultural crops), and introduce a more efficient tax system. It also involved an overhaul of several state industries, such as the state-owned mining company, the outcome of which was the dismissal of 23,000 miners. A further effect of trade liberalization was that Bolivian markets were flooded with cheap imported goods, which caused serious trouble for large and medium-sized factories (Kohl and Farthing, 2006). Since then, an estimated 65% of the Bolivian workforce has been unemployed, underemployed, or informally employed (Tokman, 2007). The trade unions have been greatly weakened (Lucero, 2008; García Linera et al., 2008). Although there were various coalitions comprising different parties,<sup>3</sup> their policies were fairly consistent. The result was, for example, some slow, uneven, and fragile macro-economic growth, as well as persistent poverty, high unemployment figures, and a lack of substantial progress in such areas as health care and education (the latter, however, made progress in the second half of the 1990s). Moreover, during these years there was no explicit public or political debate on the course of the reigning economic policies, or on the foreseeable effects of one or the other direction in managing the country’s economy (Salman, 2006; McNeish, 2006). Electoral campaigns were vague and often manipulated, and although there was no large-scale rigging of elections, there were frequent accusations of, for instance, using fiscal money for the canvassing of incumbent governing parties (Assies and Salman, 2003a). Moreover, party programs and campaigns often lacked any content-focused attempt to distinguish the party from political alternatives. Party differences had nothing to do with positions *vis-à-vis* policy alternatives, or with efforts to articulate different societal sectors, or with different interest patterns among the population. Campaigns were personalist, corporatist-clientelistic, and often demagogic. Tapia and Toranzo (2000: 30) criticized the country’s political parties for failing to be mediators or articulators

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<sup>3</sup> The three main parties were the ADN, the MNR, and MIR. The ADN (*Acción Democrática Nacionalista*; Nationalist Democratic Action) was a right-wing party founded by Hugo Banzer after he stepped down from his dictatorial seat. The MNR (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*; Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) was the party responsible for the 1952 revolution, which formally ended aristocratic and ethnically biased rule in the country. In those days, it was inspired by socialism and an egalitarian strategy downplaying ethnicity, but it later became more conservative and never managed to put an end to the exclusion of the indigenous population from positions of power or influence. Still, it had suffered from authoritarian repression in the 1970s, and Banzer’s ADN was therefore an implausible alliance partner. However, in practice the differences between the ADN’s conservatism and elitism and the MNR’s conservatism and elitism had faded by the mid 1980s. Finally, there was the MIR (*Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionario*; Movement of the Revolutionary Left), which originally was a left-wing split-off from the MNR, but later turned into an opportunistic, and seriously corrupt election machine. This party, too, had suffered from Banzer’s repression, but was nevertheless willing to make a pact with the ADN.

of representation. Parties were “ideologically thin electoral vehicles” (Lucero, 2008: 12). The most serious effect of this party modality was that parties could hardly be held accountable for their actions as governing or opposition parties. No political “identity” was present against which concrete stances could be measured; and the fact that this characterized parties’ performance for decades meant that people “unlearned” to compare parties’ self-presentations in terms of political differences and in terms of closeness to their proper interests and grievances (Latinobarómetro, 2004). Instead, social organizations (e.g., trade unions) and, increasingly, newer social movements (e.g., civic committees, federations of neighborhood councils, peasant unions, ‘cocaleros’, and ethnic organizations) were “the primary organizations expressing the interests of society” (Gamarra and Malloy, 1995, cited by Lucero 2008: 42). This is not the place to go into more detail, or to sketch the whole sequence of coalitions, presidents, their policies, or the concrete measures that triggered the most massive protests (Assies and Salman, 2003a, 2003b; Salman, 2006; Crabtree, 2005). Suffice it to say that the protests were the cradle of the social movements that, eventually, helped Evo Morales to become president. It should be added to this that the overwhelming majority of these movements were active in the western highlands of the country, where the indigenous form a clear majority.

The story of these movements is partly that of the protests. From the 1980s onward, and especially between 2000 and 2005, an uncountable series of protests characterized the country’s daily routine. By then, the belief in political inclusion for the subaltern and indigenous, and in political change through elections, had withered. The protests – or head-on clashes with governmental measures resulting from the absence of other credible channels to access politics – showed that in the eyes of many Bolivians, “democracy” was no more than a sham. In these years, the movements slowly came to embody not only the emerging societal protest against a unipolar (García Linera et al., 2008: 13) right-wing polity, but also “societal democratization machineries” (idem: 19). In this sense, they were the answer to an exclusionary political system that was unable and unwilling to change economic policies it considered beyond discussion (Assies and Salman, 2003a; McNeish, 2006), and that was unable and unwilling to open up the “petrified” and dysfunctional democratic mores.

Collective interest promotion and collective citizenship have traditionally been important in Bolivia (García Linera et al., 2008: 14). PNUD/Wanderley (2007) emphasizes the “communitarian” and collective strategies that are often applied to ensure rights, obtain benefits, and influence politics and political decisions. Wanderley connects this collective attitude to a strong tradition of jointly defending one’s rights and dignity. Individual rights and identities in Bolivia are often the result of collective performance (PNUD/Wanderley, 2007: 389). Contrary to

the personal experience of vulnerability and inferiority, many people feel empowered and “capacitated” when they act in the context of collective action. García Linera et al. (2008: 14-16) and Dangl (2009) assert that, from the 1980s onward, the tradition of “functional” collective interest promotion (exemplified by COB, the once mighty national trade union federation) slowly made way for more territorial and cultural features. These new social movements gradually took over the role the old trade unions had played, and thus expressed the changed socio-economic and cultural make-up of Bolivian society, in which indigenous identities became increasingly politicized (Kruse, 2005, García Linera et al., 2008). The movements that emerged in the 1990s and came to full bloom in the years between 2000 and 2005, are the movements of coca-growers (Coca Trópico), the federation of ‘juntas de vecinos’ (FEJUVEs; neighborhood councils) in various cities (e.g., El Alto), the ‘Coordinación’ of water consumers in and around Cochabamba and other cities, the migrating peasants looking for new land in the east of the country (Confederación de Colonizadores), the miners (both the salaried ones and those organized in cooperativos, which held mining concessions), and the indigenous movements like Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu, (CONAMAQ), ‘Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente’ (CIDOB), ‘Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos del Oriente’ (CPESC), and ‘Movimiento sin Tierra’ (MST; the landless peasants). The indigenous also gained prominence in their peasant-cum-ethnic stature, for example in ‘Confederación Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia’ (CSUTCB; Confederation of Peasant Workers’ Unions of Bolivia) and its women’s branch, ‘Federación de Mujeres Campesinas Bartolina Sisa’, or recurring to their local organization in ‘sindicatos’ (rural unions) or ‘ayllus’, the traditional Andes community organizational form, which combines territory and symbolic kinship. Furthermore, there were actions by the unions of transporters and teachers, by health workers, by students, pensioners, street vendors, organizations that opposed free-trade treaties or other outcomes of globalization processes (Mayorga and Córdova, 2008), and many others. They not always represented consolidated social movements, and there was a lot of overlap between these initiatives. Nevertheless, they were massive protests, often street rallies, gatherings, ‘cabildos’, (“plenary street demonstrations”), and as such, according to García Linera *et al.* (2008: 19), “mechanisms that were projected as political systems, complementary or alternative, able to comply more efficiently and democratically than parties and the ‘aggregation of wills’ through liberal representation” (see also Lucero, 2008). More than the concrete protest issue was often at stake. Protest alluded to a comprehensive alternative to the ruinous “liberal” democratic legacy. These social movements demanded the right to have a say in changes in this legacy. Hence,

the movements began to demand that the democratic system undergo an encompassing transformation, although they never suggested abrogating the rights and freedoms offered by the existing democratic system. The memory of the era of dictatorships was a strong incentive for this adherence to the freedoms that come with democracy. As a matter of fact, the fierce criticism of the existing democracy was combined with pride in having restored democracy in the 1980s and being a democratic country. This characteristic, as was address below had its impact on how the relations between governance and demand-orientation later evolve. In the course of time many of these movements came to feel that they were to some extent represented in the 'Movimiento al Socialismo' (MAS), the movement/party that brought Evo Morales to power in 2005.

The 'cocaleros' (coca-growers), and their leader Evo Morales, took the lead in building a political party out of the movements. It is therefore not surprising that the 'cocaleros' now have a prominent position in MAS, and that Morales, being president, continues to be their leader. According to Zegada and colleagues (2008: 88-91), besides the 'cocaleros', also the CSUTCB, CIDOB, 'Confederación de Colonizadores, and 'Federación de Mujeres Campesinas Bartolina Sisa' are the ones that became organically integrated in the MAS apparatus. The authors speak of a "symbiosis" and of the co-optation of the leaders of these movements (idem: 88, 90), but add that this does not mean that these movements are a monolithic block. Nevertheless, it does mean that the leaders of these movements are very close to Morales and participated in strategic and tactical decision-making. It also means that, in mobilizations where MAS as such needed to be represented on the street, members of these movements would massively participate.

A second circle of movements are those that are close to, and even linked to, MAS, but that are not part of the decision-making circle. They include 'Federación de Juntas Vecinales de la ciudad de El Alto' (FEJUVE) and 'Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia' (FSTMB; the salaried miners of Bolivia). They rallied in favor of MAS, they delivered substantial numbers of parliamentarians in the 2002, 2005 and 2009 elections, and they display "a critical support that would not generate conflicts" (idem: 92). Indicative of their somewhat more independent stance is that, when the leader of El Alto's FEJUVE (Abel Mamani) was made minister in Morales's first cabinet (it was a short-lived ministry, by the way), FEJUVE immediately declared that Mamani did not represent them as a movement (idem: 94).

A third circle includes the movements that support MAS's project for change, in general terms. But they are either more radical in their leftist stances, or they want to defend their autonomy. They do not want to be part of government circles or of 'oficialismo'. They comprise, for example, the local branch of COB (the national trade

union federation): COR in the city of 'El Alto and Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu' (CONAMAQ), a quite radically indigenist grouping of local indigenous organizations and associations. These movements, which are convinced that "generating conflicts for the government now would be disadvantageous for the interests of the popular sectors" (idem: 96), have abstained from mobilizing against the MAS government, but have publicly uttered criticisms.

Thus at the time (that is, before December 2005), MAS developed as a movement party. It built up a party structure with a group of close friends and trustees, and designed the party's political and ideological profile. But during this process, in particular with the movements in the first circle, it negotiated strategies, asked for input on specific political themes and areas, organized special meetings with a host of movements to ask for ideas and to adapt its political proposals, and rallied with other social movements on a series of occasions (Zegada et al., 2008: 26-45; Grey-Postero, 2009: 303; Lucero 2008: 139-140). MAS managed to convince many movements because it combined framing in class and socio-economic terms with framing in ethnic terms. It synthesized national-popular, leftist Marxist and indigenist inspirations. It represented "the popular" and "the indigenous," all those suffering the consequences of the politics of "elites, imperialists, neoliberals, 'vendepatrias'" (literally "land sellers," basically: traitors). Hence, a counter-discourse emerged that highlighted the "alternative" ways of thinking and governing in indigenous traditions, the ongoing exclusion of indigenous voices in real positions of power, the indifference toward the plight of the poor, and the 'blanco-mestizo' character of neoliberalism (e.g. the idea that neoliberalism somehow represented the Western world). This was a discourse that may have been "unclear in its ideological delineation," but was able to become "cohesive at moments of confrontation with the government" (Zegada et al., 2008: 56-57). Additionally, a wavering attitude toward "formal democracy" became apparent in these movements: They did not defend it, but cherished its benefits and freedoms – and at the same time criticized it for its Western imprint and scarce channels for political participation.

The story of the strengthening of MAS suggests that in the disagreement between Giugni (1998) and Cress and Snow (2000) on whether movement characteristics or environmental conditions contribute more to movement outcomes, neither side would be fully correct: It seems that it is the "fine dialectics" between the two that help explain the fortunes of movements. The characteristics of both impinge, through various mediations, upon the ongoing developments of both the social movement and the "synthesizing" electoral representative (turning into government). Concretely, MAS did not need a coherent singular discourse in order to develop into a convincing electoral alternative, because its opponent was in the



midst of a process of disarray and disqualifying itself as the “gang” responsible for disaster and irresponsiveness, and also because MAS needed some ambiguity in its rhetoric in order to become authoritative for all these very different movements and demands (Rubin, 1998). MAS did, however, need a certain degree of bureaucratization in order to be an electoral match for the old polity. It also needed an “organic” link with the entire array of movements if it were to fulfill its role as synthesizing entity. But it could only flourish because of the strong position of the whole range of social movements. Between 2000 and 2005, the social movements determined the political agenda, and to a large degree forced the ruling administrations to engage with the issues promoted by actors within these movements. MAS was responsive and, therefore, thrived on these waves of protests. Approaching the events from the other end, we see that the initial government’s stance whereby repression/negotiation/non-delivery was the order of the day, evolved in the course of time through an episode of demonizing MAS and Morales, into a stance that resulted in the old party system being abandoned even by the party dinosaurs and replaced by a new, “united” front in an attempt to withstand Morales’s growing popularity. In 2005, it proved too little, too late. Hence, it is not MAS’s qualities alone, or the environmental features themselves, but the process of mutual “co-manufacturing” that helps to understand why the drastic political turnaround occurred in 2005. The main theoretical issue raised, however, is that of the rift that the author believed should occur if the movements’ victory is accompanied by democratic institutional continuity, and consequentially by an obligation of the governing faction of these movements to abide by the democratic mores. In such cases, beyond the technical, material, or political obstacles to realizing all the changes that were demanded earlier, there is the key obstacle of the new position the governing entity will be in: As governing entity, it will have to heed the procedures and regulations, even in its attempts to push through the proposed changes as fast as possible. The non-governing components of the whole of the movements will, because of their position, not have much understanding of this predicament – despite the fact that they will defend, in general terms, Bolivia as a democracy.

## **AFTER THE TURN: THE COMPLEXITIES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS–MAS RELATIONSHIPS**

In December 2005, MAS won a landslide victory (54% of the votes). Since early 2006, it has been the governing party in Bolivia. During its first term, which ran till the end of 2009, it had to reckon with an oppositional majority in the senate (although it had a majority in the chamber of representatives). MAS’s most important feats of arms in its 2006 to 2009 term were the nationalization of the

country’s large reserves of natural gas and other strategic natural resources and strategic industries, a new, indigenous-friendly constitution, and a series of social and poverty-alleviating measures.

In the December 2010 election, MAS won 64% of the votes, which after the allocation of parliamentary seats gave it a two-thirds majority in both houses. But the change in Bolivia’s social movement landscape dates, of course, from early 2006. The constellation that emerged turned out to present completely new problems: While until 2005, the movements had been the expression of the broken relationship between state and civil society (Salman, 2006, 2007; Garcíá Linera et al., 2008) and an incipient model for alternatives that were eventually embodied in MAS, they had now suddenly become, in a way, the government itself (Cuba Rojas, 2006) – even if they hardly represented any unified program. Before the development of the relationship between MAS and the social movements that backed it after it had assumed governing responsibilities was analyzed, there is need to first provide a bit of background about Bolivia’s new political landscape. To begin with, new social movements emerged immediately after the inauguration of Morales. The pro-MAS movements had their stronghold in the highlands and “indigenous” west of the country. When their increasingly “ethnic” framing became state policy, it triggered a reaction in the eastern lowlands, where conservative forces created a right-wing, regional, and increasingly anti-indigenous countermovement, which built upon a decade-old regionalism (Soruco et al., 2008; Zegada et al., 2008: 170; Roca, 2008). The lowland departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, and Tarija became known as the ‘media luna’ (“half moon”), because of their geographic shape. The polarization between the new central government and the ‘media luna’ reached its height in 2008, when violent attacks against MAS supporters in the main cities of these department became rampant – and MAS supporters did their share against oppositional demonstrations in “their territory.” The nadir was an armed attack on a convoy of pro-MAS peasants in the department of Pando in September 2008, when more than ten were killed.

The main natural gas reserves are in these eastern departments, and regional entrepreneurs succeeded in mobilizing the departments for more “autonomy” – which, according to many, was a cover-up for a counter-strategy aimed at attaining regional rather than national agreements with the transnational companies that are interested in exploiting the gas, and at preserving traditional elite privileges (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 185; Soruco et al., 2008; Zegada et al., 2008: 173-176; Assies, 2006; Spronk and Webber, 2007: 37). They became grouped around the ‘comites’ ‘cívicos’ of the departments and their main cities, and pressed for regional autonomy. In the period 2006 to 2009, they had substantial mobilization power. Most observers agree that traits of racism were among the participants’ motives, and many condemned the flare-ups

of violence that sometimes occurred during their rallies (Sorucu et al., 2008; Assies 2006).<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, a genuine, anti-government group of social movements emerged in the east of the country after MAS assumed governance. They are conspicuously absent from most publications, even recent ones, on “social movements in Bolivia” (Dangl, 2009; Mayorga and Córdova, 2008; García Linera et al., 2008); an exception is Zegada et al., (2008: 169-178). They did, however, trigger counter-reactions by pro-MAS movements, which were sometimes surprised that the government would not “categorically” support them in their initiatives – a feature that can only be explained by the obligation of the government to also tolerate the challengers. The movements found it hard to understand why MAS did not simply react as a ‘movement’ that was diametrically opposed to and would try to crush these challengers.

This development – and this is another important context feature – can be partly explained by a remarkable “semantic maneuver” by the MAS administration. Evo, MAS, and subsequently the media and even the opposition, began to refer to “the social movements” as though they were a clearly identifiable, addressable entity, namely the cluster of movements supporting the new administration. It is now very common to hear in Bolivia Evo Morales saying “I will ask the social movements to support the new constitution” (e.g., the newspaper *Ultimas Noticias*, 22-8-2008), to hear a critical journalist say “the social movements have hijacked Evo’s administration” (newspaper *La Prensa* 10-11-2009), to hear the opposition say “the social movements are Evo’s strong-arm squad” (biweekly *Nueva Crónica* 44, July 2009, 4-5), and to hear a spokesperson of some movement say “We, the social movements, will closely watch the current process” (the newspaper *La Prensa*, 6-3-2009, 13-8-2009). The social movements that back Evo Morales’s victory seem, as a whole, to have acquired a sort of legal personality. Social movements have thus become a very peculiar entity in both government and opposition discourses: They are now a political protagonist with a name tag, one that is explicitly and directly addressed by other political players as though it were a full-fledged interlocutor in politics. In the new constitution, which was approved in a

referendum in January 2009, an explicit and legal role had been formulated for the social movements. In título VI, artículo 241, apartado 2, it is stated that “organized civil society will control public administration at all state levels” (my translation). Here, social movements are not only recognized as legitimate defenders of interests, but are also integrated in the genesis of legislation and in state affairs in such a way that they have almost become a part of state institutionality. In his speeches, Evo often addresses the movements, soliciting them to participate in his administration (Mayorga, 2007). Movements are addressed as though they could be appointed, or at least called upon, for specific political goals or by specific political actors. The government also established CONALDE (Consejo Nacional Democrático), in which all the national movements that back the government allegedly unite to guarantee the administration’s position. This might lead one to believe that the relationship between the movements and MAS-as-government is as fluent as it, in general, was before 2005. But this idea neglects the fact that the position of both is now completely different. MAS is now the government. As the government, it will of course continue to pursue its ideals. But it also needs to “manage” the country, it needs to rule and monitor all state affairs, and – last but not least – it needs to sustain and protect the democracy and the liberties and rights of all Bolivian citizens. This inevitably limits its freedom to behave as a social movement as unconcerned as it used to do. For the social movements behind MAS, on the other hand, as various authors have suggested (Tarrow, 1998, Alvarez et al., 1998; Foweraker, 1995), it is only “natural” that they continue to act on their own accord, define their own strategy, and rally whenever they themselves deem fit. But their peculiar genesis and position in Bolivia, and the administration’s strategy, makes precisely that very difficult. They were one of the important vehicles for Morales’s journey to power, and they are now regarded by the government as the organic allies of the “revolution” that Evo embodies (Zegada et al., 2008; García Linera et al., 2008). Their independence during the years of protest, which made them natural collaborators of the political ambition of MAS but still autonomous in their decisions, has reversed and, as far as the government is concerned, turned them into defenders of what has now been achieved. As “defenders,” however, they simultaneously lose their independent position because they end up as constituent components of the incumbent administration, and thus stop complying with one “prerequisite” of being social movements; while at the same time they are, in a way, officially coined and declared “the social movements” of Bolivia. This could be diagnosed as a “subordination of the social movements to the state” (Zegada et al., 2008: 72, 100). Furthermore, it seems doubtful that such a situation fosters free internal debate and democracy within the social movements. That, however, is not the whole story.

<sup>4</sup> In Bolivia, some, traditionally relatively innocent, animosity between the majority populations of the western highlands and the eastern lowlands has existed for a long time. The first, often labelled the *Collas*, are stereotyped as indigenous, darker-skinned, and “pre-modern;” the latter (*Cambas*) as taller, mostly descendants of European migrants, and more “entrepreneurial” (Sorucu et al. 2008, Roca 2008, Barragán 2008, Paz Patiño et al. 2009). The *Colla*–*Camba* opposition has acquired, especially since Morales assumed power, new rhetoric intensity which has polarized the country. The stereotypes applied in this verbal skirmish are twisted in that descendants of Spanish and European origin also reside in the west (and often participated enthusiastically in marginalizing their indigenous neighbours). Additionally, also in the east many different indigenous peoples traditionally have their home and large flows of western (Aymara and Quechua) indigenous individuals have migrated to the east in recent decades. Hence, the stereotypes are of course deeply wrong, but to a large degree, especially in recent years, “true in their consequences.”

Although the opposition accuses the government of instructing and directing “the” social movements, especially when protest against Morales’s policies flares up, to defend (with force, if needed) the current administration,<sup>5</sup> these movements *sometimes do not hesitate to put pressure on Morales to keep his promises* (Zegada et al., 2008: 95-99), and even threaten that he “could suffer the same fate as his predecessor” (who was overthrown in June, 2005).<sup>6</sup> Thus, the social movements behind MAS also embody the impulse that is “natural” to them: to push for their causes without worrying about the government’s problems and responsibilities. In fact, during the last three years, Morales has not always been pleased with the social movements’ actions. On several occasions, movements have rallied to defend the interests of, for instance, specific groups like the mining ‘corporativos’, only to violently clash with the salaried miners – while both parties are supposedly supporters of Morales. Here, MAS had to mediate, and therefore give up the “simplicity” of struggling for “the obvious cause.” A similar thing occurred in various cases in which independent groups of miners had been ousted from their mineshafts by, comuneros, – rural community dwellers living on that territory and claiming territorial autonomy (one of the issues propagandized by MAS) – or when importers/sellers of used clothes brought in from Europe or the USA clashed with the owners of and workers at the workshops where national clothing is produced, and in whose favor the government finally decided in May 2009. Here, too, MAS found itself in a situation in which it saw it as its duty to mediate, to maintain peace, and to finally decide in favor of one or the other with “the national interest” in mind – precisely the situation a social movement never faces. Additionally, Morales’s cabinet was questioned by “the social movements” in early 2006, and again in March to April 2009 because it did not contain enough indigenous ministers.<sup>7</sup> Arguably, MAS had in various cases decided to opt for experience and expertise rather than ethnic affinity and loyalty, something it would probably not have done had it still been a social movement claiming indigenous emancipation. COB challenged the MAS administration in May 2010, when it (albeit divided; the CSUTCB would not join in) rallied against a 5% wage increase proposed by the government. COB demanded substantially more, launched a march toward La Paz, and Morales, conspicuously, called upon the “responsibility” of the country’s workers. Rises in food prices and a delay in land-redistribution measures also triggered protests, which were sometimes harshly criticized by other supporters of Morales, fearing the weakening of his position, especially when such protests coincided with “sabotaging” tactics undertaken by the opposition. All

these protests were mounted by relatively poor, often indigenous, and habitually well-organized bands; that is, by social movements, and MAS did not always give in: It obviously cared about its image of being “fair,” of respecting the interests of private enterprises and the owners of private property, and of respecting the law and having the national interests in mind. In general, of course, the movements in the first and second circles mobilized less than those in the third circle and in the opposition movements. But still, an estrangement clearly emerged between the logics of “ordinary social movements” and the now-governing ‘former’ social movement.

The ambivalence of MAS causes movements to oscillate between being allies and being opponents – depending on concrete issues, time-specific events, and tactical uncertainties. These mixed outcomes demonstrate the unsettled situation of social movements in Bolivia. Resuming the characteristics of the three main actors, the author concludes that the movements that oppose the government, which are mainly concentrated in the east of the country, best live up to what one would expect: They frame their differences with government measures, their identities, and their oppositional discourses, and they rally. They are social movements doing what one would suppose them to do. They oppose the incumbent administration, they struggle for their views and interests, and they are unconcerned about governability or their share in the safeguarding of democracy, the rule of law, and abiding by procedures and legal stipulations.

The second actor – the whole of pro-Morales movements – had often proved willing to confront these demonstrations, violently if needed, and were astonished when the government would not immediately support and facilitate them. But in more tranquil times, they have oscillated between categorical support and incidental or regular protest. Most of the movements identify with the current government and its policies, but that does not mean they will always acquiesce. The social movements seem to be searching for their position and attitude in a situation in which they largely agree with the government in terms of contents, but in terms of position and “task” are in a completely different situation. Thus, they will not always fully identify with or even have empathy for the more compound position “their” governing emissary is in.

Finally, in its discourses and in many of its actions and measures, MAS, the third actor, continues to struggle for its ideas and ideals (the ones it shares with its supporting social movements). However, it also attempts to co-opt these movements and is very unhappy whenever it fails to do so. Most importantly, when it assumed governance, it had to accept an extra responsibility that is at odds with its self-identification as a movement: It has to guarantee the rights of its opponents, its former adversaries. It has to abide by the rules, the legislation, the institution. It has to manage the state and the country, and this inevitably

<sup>5</sup> See *La historia paralela*, “internacional,” January 1, 2007, [www.lahistoriaparalela.com.ar](http://www.lahistoriaparalela.com.ar)

<sup>6</sup> see [www.mrzine.monthlyreview.org/eb050206.html](http://www.mrzine.monthlyreview.org/eb050206.html), 5-2-2006

<sup>7</sup> In *IAR-Noticias* January 24, 2006, see [www.iarnoticias.com](http://www.iarnoticias.com).

to it drifting away to a certain degree from the social movements that back and build it.

## CONCLUSION

In the literature that reflects upon questions related to social movements and their success, most of the attention has been given to the factors that help explain this success. Some controversy is visible between authors who emphasize situational and environmental factors, and those who stress the importance of the intrinsic characteristics of the movements and/or their mutual alliances. The reconstruction of the case of the Bolivian emergence of a range of social movements and their amalgamation in MAS, suggests that the interaction between these two dimensions is the crucial factor. MAS developed the way it did both because of the nature of the grievances and issues brought forward by its “constitutive” social movements, because of its strategic decisions that were influenced by these movements, and because of its attempts to manifest itself as a credible alternative to the bankrupt party system that had been in place.

In more theoretical debates, however, little attention had been paid to situations in which complete, or nearly complete, success really materialized. Only cases in which a military victory resulted in the annihilation and rebuilding of the state institutionality – as in Iran, Nicaragua, and Zimbabwe – have been analyzed. Attention to the concrete re-establishment of the relationships between social movements and the new government (allegedly backed by these movements) has, however, been central only in cases like the South African one. Here, most importance was given to the fierce criticisms the ANC’s first government received because it gave higher priority to economic growth and monetary “health,” than to the long overdue social debts (Weeks, 1999) and the widening gap between party officials and the rank and file (Lanegram, 1995; Zuern, 2004). Not much work has been dedicated to situations in which a social movements’ representative and party became the hegemonic and governing force, or to what this does to the relationship between this representative and the gamut of (now less autonomous?) movements that support it.

The Bolivian case suggests that the most important characteristic of such a configuration is a certain degree of division between the governing entity and the movements – not only because of the “moderation” of the first, but also because its change in position inevitably makes it drift away from social movement logics. There is an “intrinsic” difference between government and social movements, no matter how similar their political positions and priorities. This difference will always lead to a certain incomprehension among the social movements about the (their) government considerations and decisions, and it

will, as suggested by the author in many cases also lead to the government attempting to co-opt and maintain the full loyalty of the movements, while facing a dilemma between prioritizing the fulfillment of the movements’ wish-list or prioritizing its status as an administration that is “stately,” despite its rebellious past.

It also seems plausible that such a situation will always create insecurity for the social movements that support the new government. On the one hand, it is *their* government: They brought it there, and it has to do what was agreed. On the other hand, the government has to be a government for all: Treating all citizens equally and honoring general, “universal” rules. It has to give as much room to oppositional street demonstrations as to those organized by supporting movements. From the movements’ perspective, this is something that is difficult to comprehend. Nevertheless, it is inherent in the shift that the successful movement “envoy” goes through, particularly in cases in which democratic institutionality is upheld and even defended by all parties. Franz (2008: 127-128) reminds us that any mature democracy needs the distinction between democratic participation on the one hand, and the rule of law, and the more “apolitical” state spheres, on the other; a “clear separation between the checks and balances aspect of the liberal state and the democratic component” (idem). For the supporting movements, their position and their “nature” make this difficult to appreciate. This is especially the case when (as in Bolivia) the “envoy” in its discourses continues to use the protest movement vernacular. Which is why, as a “movement among all the others,” MAS is a partner in an “instable coalition” (Mayorga, 2007). In that coalition, it cannot be denied, nor should it surprise anyone, that the pro-government rallies and demands met with a friendlier response than the oppositional ones. This reveals the difficult position the current polity is in: In terms of contents and of affinities, it partially overlaps with “its” social movements. But as polity, it has to do two, occasionally contradictory things: It has to realize a political program, and in this pursuit it finds a host of social movements on its side; but it also has to maintain and sustain “the state,” and as such is liable to warrant equal treatment for all citizens and their demonstrations. Although most observers (e.g., Organization of American States, Human Rights Watch) agree that the Morales administration in general complied with its responsibility to behave “stately” and “dignified,” it has also been under attack from the opposition for authoritarianism, patrimonialism, and nepotism and Franz (2008) pointed to the “fourth power” mentioned in the new constitution. The Morales government is very much in favor – at least verbally, but also in initial proposals for the new constitution – of giving far-reaching power to the social movements and/or the citizenry (the vague distinction between the two in government discourse being one reason for Barrios to worry): “the fourth power would exercise political and administrative control over the

executive, legislative and judicial powers and (...) would stand above the classic powers since it was conceived as a power of the people" (Barrios, 2008: 136). Although in the final version of the new constitution, the idea was eventually watered down, the issue remains: When does a radical, highly participative, decentered, communal, and "direct" form of democracy (e.g., a key role for the social movements in governing) begin to threaten institutional equilibrium, and even the idea of equality in terms of opportunities for access to decision-making, and in terms of citizen guarantees? When does it begin to impinge upon the very idea of the state, because the latter is seen as something to be "captured" (idem: 129), "a space that can be evenly taken over, without proper consideration of how this might affect its specialized functions and dynamics"? (idem 132), and when does that begin to smother the space that society needs (and that the state ought to guarantee) in order to deliberate, to search for identities, and to protest? Bolivia is still in the process of constructing the equilibrium needed. The attempt by MAS to behave "institutional" and stately is entangled with its political program and with the social movements that support it. Evaluating the government's success is difficult, because the political stance toward the current administration will often prevail in peoples' views. However, according to a UNDP study (Aranibar, 2008), trust in and the legitimacy of democracy in Bolivia has increased since Morales assumed power, and although the director of Latinobarómetro<sup>8</sup> and the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights hold the same opinion,<sup>9</sup> criticism persists (Molina, 2007).

Bolivia's situation is, of course, unique. But the sort of dilemmas that have surfaced in the country since MAS, which represents radically challenging social movements, won a landslide electoral victory twice in succession, are not. Any transition that is accompanied by institutional continuity will put the power-assuming entity in a quandary between its movement identity and its governance duties, will lead to irritation between the governing envoy and the movements, will create insecurity for these movements, and will result in fierce debates about democracy, the rule of law, and the rights of the defeated.

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<sup>8</sup> See [http://www.infolatam.com/entrada/latinobarometro\\_la\\_opinion\\_sobre\\_la\\_demo-10110.html](http://www.infolatam.com/entrada/latinobarometro_la_opinion_sobre_la_demo-10110.html), 2008.

<sup>9</sup> In March 2010, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights expressed, albeit with some qualifications, that he felt positive about developments in Bolivia (see *La Prensa* 25-3-2010).



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